

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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ABSTRACT

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STATE	#x	ARMY	#x	NAVY	#x	AIR	#x	FBI	AEC						
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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

Working Class Political Attitudes

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members included. not more than 10 or 12% of the employees at the United Steel works, National Enterprise, in Kladno (N 50-09, E 14-06) were pro-Communist and favored a continuation of the present regime. The large numbers of new workers brought into the industry in recent years were mostly dissatisfied with their lot. Probably fewer than half of the people employed at the United Steel Works, National Enterprise, saw themselves as permanent workers in the steel industry. They had been brought into it in various recruitment drives, many under indirect compulsion, and intended to leave the industry whenever they could find something else to do which would not cost them too much of a cut in take-home pay.

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2. The workers were generally indifferent to the public ownership of the industry. Source said that one worker jokingly offered to trade his hypothetical "share" in the works for a glass of beer. Source believed that, whereas in 1946 perhaps 40% of the Czechoslovak working class had favored the socialization of industry, only about 15% still held to such views. In the event of a change of regime, a large majority of the working class would certainly favor restoration of private enterprise in agriculture, retail trade, and small industry. The situation was more complicated as regards large industry, however, as some reforms introduced since nationalization

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had undoubtedly improved working conditions in the steel industry. For example, [redacted] at the Konev works, a branch of the United Steel Works, National Enterprise, there had been no baths for the workers until the war. In the matter of works canteens, baths, medical care, and housing, the workers at Kladno knew that conditions were better for them than before the war. Source summed up the workers' opinions by saying that, if the Communist regime were to disappear, the workers would insist on a large measure of worker control of heavy industry. As a minimum, there would certainly be a demand for the sort of "co-determination" rights which the West German trade unions claim. It was important to note, however, that such a demand by the Czech workers, in the present circumstances in Czechoslovakia, was essentially an anti-Communist demand. It was an expression of opposition to the present state of affairs. It should not be seen as evidence of any extensive underlying support for the programs and practices of the Communist regime.

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3. Source estimated that in the part of the Poldi works, a branch of the United Steel Works, National Enterprise, [redacted] there were only about 20 Party members out of some 240 workers. It was doubtful if even one was a convinced Communist. Most of the members were men in their thirties and forties. Only five had belonged to the Party before 1948. Only one of the 20 was below 25 years of age. Source had the impression that new recruits to the Party now mainly came from ambitious white collar workers and from former members of the middle-class who had been forced to become workers. The Party seemed to be most interested in recruiting members of the technical intelligentsia, but did not appear to have induced very many of these to accept the responsibilities of Party membership. The Party also was glad to recruit ordinary working men, but in the main, these likewise were reluctant to give their time to the Party.

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4. The trade union organization in the steel mill was largely staffed by non-Party members. Only two or three of the 17 part-time ROH [redacted] (where about 240 men and women were employed) were Party members. There was only one full-time ROH official in this group, a former worker of lower middle-class origin who gave up his job when elected chairman of the Workshop Council (dilenska rada). He was an ineffectual fellow, a nominal Party member. Trade union jobs were obviously filled in different ways in different shops, but in the steel mill the whole process of selection seemed haphazard in the extreme. Meetings were called on only a few minutes' notice, and names were called for from the floor. Most of the times such meetings were spent listening to the excuses of various nominees as to why they could not take the jobs for which they had been suggested. The Party organization was [redacted] and the offices being filled were so generally unimportant, that the Party played little or no role in the selection of the persons who were finally elected. Source said it was desirable that Western radio stations urge the workers to take more interest in such trade union matters, but added that, in the nature of things, there were very narrow limits to what such freely chosen unpaid functionaries could accomplish. Though the trade union was generally unimportant in the works, practically everyone belonged to it, since non-members were not entitled to a reduction on the cost of meals in the canteen. A meal costing 4.20 crowns could be had by ROH members for only 2.80 crowns. The saving on meals alone was therefore always greater than the cost of the union dues, figured at one per cent of the gross salary.

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5. Though without independence and authority, the minor functionaries of the union were nevertheless sometimes able and willing to help their workmates in various undercover ways. As an example of this, [redacted] the advisor for social questions in his part of the works, when sent to a nearby village

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to investigate an allegation that a worker from the plant was not really ill but was working on an agricultural cooperative, covered up for the absentee by obtaining a certificate from the chairman of the JZD that the fellow had not done any paid work on the farm. The JZD chairman gave the certificate willingly when the ROH advisor pointed out that the employment of such a man without proper notification to the authorities was a punishable offense. The plant management would have forced the absentee to return the sick pay he had received, if the trade union investigator had not handled the case as he did. This illustrated, incidentally, the way in which the authorities made use of these unpaid trade union functionaries to investigate cases of absenteeism, to check up on sick leave claims, and in general to relieve the authorities of some of the odium of enforcing labor discipline.

6. Source had no knowledge of what activities, if any, former Social Democrats might still be carrying on within the trade union organization, but he said that it was common knowledge among the workers that a considerable number of the staff of the trade union newspaper Prace could be counted on to listen sympathetically to complaints addressed to the paper. A grievance aired in a letter to Prace was much more likely to be followed by a thorough investigation and remedial action than was the case with either a complaint to the ROH works council or a letter to President Zapotocky.

7. Source did not believe that there was any sabotage to speak of in Czechoslovak industry at present. The authorities were fairly quick to accuse people of sabotage whenever anything went wrong in a factory, but in most such cases the accidents or breakdowns were natural ones. The only example of this [redacted] in the United Steel Works, National Enterprise, was the arrest on sabotage charges [redacted] of 10 or 12 other workmen (one of whom was a priest) when a furnace in the Konev works was damaged. [redacted] none was guilty of any crime. They were given sentences of from two to 12 years.

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Czech-German and Czech-Slovak Relations

8. Source had known only a few Slovaks personally, but was convinced that a majority of the Slovaks still looked back on the period of the Slovak State as a golden era. He believed that the Slovaks still felt themselves to be treated as second-class citizens in Czechoslovakia. If the Communist regime were overthrown, the Slovaks would certainly want either independence or incorporation into a United States of Europe. They would not be satisfied with a restoration of the state of affairs existing during the First Republic or between 1945 and 1948.

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9. [redacted] people that the injustices done to the Sudeten Germans be set right. Source had wide and friendly relations with Czechs in many different parts of the republic, including the former Sudeten areas. On the basis of such contacts, he affirmed that 80% of the Czechs who were now occupying places where the German minority had formerly lived would be willing to return to where they had come from if an overall settlement of the problems of Czech-German relations could be reached. People commented on the fact that the American and German peoples were now close and friendly partners and asked why the same could not eventually be the case between the Czechs and the Germans. In source's view, the ideal settlement of the Czech-German problem would consist, therefore, in the granting of permission to the Sudeten Germans to return and in the moving out of the Czechs. The Czechs now living in the Sudeten areas had not formed very close attachments to their new homes, since most of the property there had been nationalized and title retained by the state. He did not think the national boundaries should be changed. The rights of the Germans would be adequately

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assured by giving them local autonomy within the Czechoslovak Republic. He thought that only two-thirds of the three million or more Sudeten Germans would want to come back, so there would still be room in the border areas for Czechs who wanted to stay there.

10. People followed with close interest the reports from foreign radio stations about steps taken recently in West Germany for a rapprochement between Czech and Sudeten German exile political groups. In 50X1
[redacted] the reputation of General Prchala had been helped by such reports. Source had a low opinion, and thought many other people in Czechoslovakia felt the same way, about the views of Zenkl, Ripka, Stransky, and other related emigres who regarded the expulsion of the Germans as a closed question.

Reactions to Western Propaganda

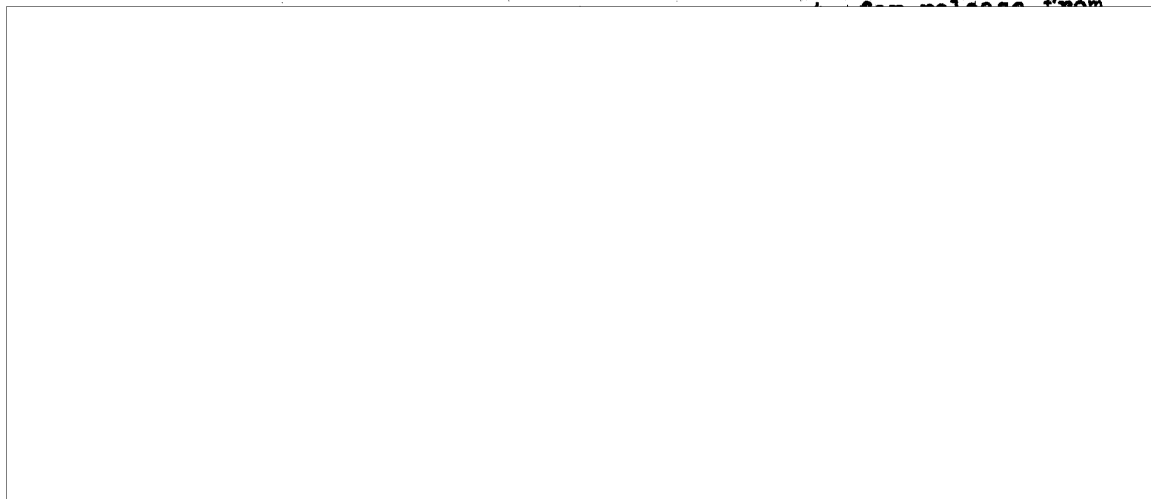
11. 50X1
[redacted] the packages of food and clothing which many people in Czechoslovakia received from friends and relatives abroad are the West's best propaganda asset. 50X1
[redacted] the Western radio stations and leaflet operations were useful, but that the food and clothing from the West had a more powerful anti-Communist influence on Czech opinions than all of the Western radio stations combined. The duties charged on parcels were not excessive. So many people received an occasional package from the West that nearly everyone thus had first-hand knowledge of how much better clothed and fed were people in the West than people in Czechoslovakia. 50X1
12. 50X1
[redacted] generally approved of the RFE leaflet actions but believed that the phrase "people's opposition" was a mistake. It made people laugh, because they were convinced that within the country no organized opposition to the Communists was possible. If there is no organized opposition, people asked, what kind of opposition can it be? For the most part, the "10 Demands" were well-received, though people remarked that, when the time came when it would be possible to agitate for reforms, the people themselves would have no trouble deciding as to what they wanted changed.
13. The first Western leaflet source saw was one of a package of leaflets, apparently printed in the West, found in 1949 in a railway car of scrap iron from West Germany. It called on the workers to sabotage production and assured them that Communist rule was only temporary. From 1953 onwards, when the leaflet campaign really got under way, he saw many leaflets at work and around Kladno. There had been so many leaflets found in the woods outside Kladno that most of the workers in the steel works must have seen the leaflets. He recalled that in 50X1
[redacted] one of the leaflets -- he didn't know which one -- was found pasted to the main gate of plant no. 1 of the United Steel Works, National Enterprise, in Kladno. He never saw the number ten written any place, but once saw on a box in the steel mill the words "Adolf come back, everything forgiven". Source heard that in 1953 six young boys, aged 17 and 18, were caught distributing RFE leaflets on a train near Kladno. They were released after only three months' confinement.
14. A number of leaflets in German and Russian, apparently intended for the Soviet Zone, were also found around Kladno from time to time. Such leaflets were read by the Czechs with quite as much interest as the leaflets in their own language, since nearly all Czechs considered that their liberation could only come after Germany had been reunited. Everything which might throw light on the prospects of a settlement of east-west difficulties in Germany was therefore of great interest to the Czechs.

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Issuance of Travel Documents for Germans to Leave Czechoslovakia

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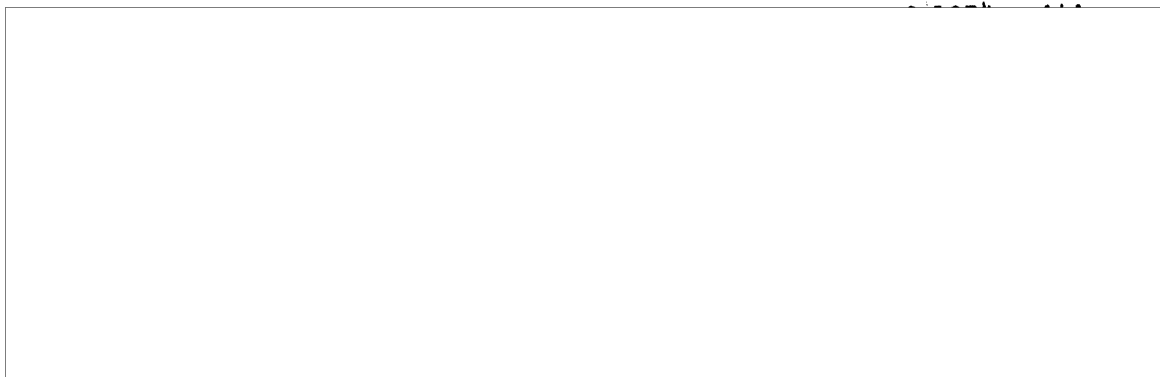
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industries, permission for this was eventually granted.

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18. Source said that there was considerable gossip in the corridors of the Czechoslovak passport office and elsewhere that ordinary Czechoslovak citizens would be allowed to visit relatives in the West, but he had never heard of anyone actually having been allowed to go. The only such case he knew of involved an ethnic German, a former prisoner who was married to a Czech woman and who had accepted Czechoslovak citizenship. This German actually obtained a passport for himself and one child to visit West Germany at Christmas 1954 -- the wife and another child remaining behind more or less as hostages -- but a few days before he was to leave the police called on him and took back the passport with the explanation that the competent authorities had changed their mind.

Vienna Peace Appeal Signature Campaign

19. When the signature campaign of the Vienna Appeal of the World Peace Council was launched in February or March this year, unpaid trade union functionaries in the steel works collected the signatures. This year, for the first time, they gave on demand printed and

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countersigned receipt forms to persons who had signed the appeal. Source supposed that the forms had been introduced to make it difficult for people to avoid signing by saying they had already signed the appeal for a signature collector elsewhere. As a practical matter, the provision of a receipt was to some extent welcomed by non-Communists because with it, they were better able to refuse to give their signatures to collectors making the rounds of taverns, flats, sports fields, and the like. Consequently, nearly all of the employees in the works insisted on receiving a receipt when they had given their signatures to the appeal.

20. Source knew of only three people who refused to sign the appeal. One was a former Party member who said, "Why should I sign an appeal against the rearmament of Germany when all the rest of the world is already rearmed?" Nothing was done to him, [] took it for granted that he would later be shifted to more disagreeable work in the foundry. The elderly widow of a post office employee who had died shortly after the first world war also refused. In the First Republic she had had a monthly pension of 800 crowns. Now she received only 200 crowns. She said, "Why should I sign, when I'm treated this way?" A retired miner whom source knew at Kladno also simply refused to sign. The fact that neither the widow nor the ex-miner was apparently victimized for his refusal was evidence, source thought, of the regime's present desire to avoid shocking public opinion in too glaring a manner.

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Outlook for the Supply of Food in Czechoslovakia

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21. [] the chairman of the Communist Party in a community near Kladno [] at a meeting this spring at the Secretariat of the Prague Region of the Party, the secretary of the Regional Communist Party Committee gave Party members a warning to the effect that the cold war might bring still further reductions in the Czechoslovak living standard. The official apparently went on to say that the food situation might even get so bad that there would not be enough food to go around, but that the Party members should not fear that they would suffer. "Only the reactionaries would go short," the secretary said. [] had known his friend, the chairman, for several years and did not believe that he had fabricated this story, but agreed that he might have unintentionally misinterpreted the Party official's declaration. [] the story might best be taken as evidence of the kind of pessimistic talk which was circulating among Party officials, rather than as evidence of any early catastrophic worsening of the food situation.

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22. [] that offers of food from the West in times of particular need, as during the floods a year or so ago, were very desirable, and did much to strengthen pro-Western sentiment among the population and to discredit the Communist system.

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Transfer of Manpower to Agriculture

23. [] employees of the steel works were now encouraged to volunteer for agricultural work in the border areas. Since February [] they were promised the same pay for such work as they had been receiving at Kladno. Thus, a workman who had been averaging 1,500 crowns a month in the steel works was told that the Ministry of Finance would make up the difference between his earnings in agriculture and his old salary. This was apparently true whether the worker went to a cooperative, a state farm, or to a tractor station. The promise was made that these payments would be given for at least one year, though people transferring to agriculture were expected to promise to stay in their new work for three years. It was not clear

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whether the extra payments would continue after the first year. In the United Steel Works, National Enterprise, only a hundred or so employees left for agricultural work, and these were mostly adventurous young people. Cynics remarked that the young girls going into the fields would probably bear a crop of babies before the fields themselves produced any harvests. Source did not know whether some people were refused work in the border regions for security reasons. He doubted that the factory management made any effort to prevent people who wanted to leave the steel industry from doing so. Earnings, what with bonuses of various kinds, were actually fairly high in the steel industry. Only about 10% of the employees [redacted] part of the works earned less than 1,000 crowns per month and these were nearly all women. About 35% earned from 1,000 to 1,500 crowns per month, about 40% from 1,500 to 2,000 crowns per month, and about 15% 2,000 crowns and over per month.

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